Some Best Practices in Social Leadership in Remote Working

- **Daily 30 min early morning check-ins and alignment with team.** How are you doing, what are you working on, what is most important today. Workload. Does anyone need more to do? Does anyone need help? Can anyone offer help or assistance?
- **Keep in touch 1-2-1 and inquire:** How are you feeling/doing? Do you need anything? Reach out by phone once a week to each team member, especially with younger associates.
- **Weekly supervisory team meetings, where experience, good practice and knowledge can be shared, cases, challenges and best approaches can be discussed.** Once a week. Do check-ins, opportunity to ask questions, discuss cases, receive and give input.
- **Availability – a digital open door policy – how, who, when.**
- **Take time to delegate and display trust that team members want to and will be productive.**
- **Scheduled meetings for follow up and feedback.** Let associates give themselves feedback first**.**
- **Set up clear goals, norms and expectations adapted to the digital setting.**
- **Regularly ask your team what they need.**

Source: Survey of twelve Nordic Law Firms under the Pandemic. Nässström, 2020.

Do-it-yourself instructions:
PTO: Predictability, Teaming, and Open Communication

WHY?
Currently, almost all remote work is 'accommodated' by altering the parameters of time and space – where and when the work gets done. To address the challenges of the connectivity paradox and the autonomy-control paradox to advance the dual agenda of greater performance *and* well-being, PTO constitutes a practical example of work redesign.

WHAT?
A protocol for a reflective process for a practice group that seeks to explore the neglected possibilities of remote working.

HOW?
- Establish one collective goal of personal interest (usually one predetermined night disconnected from work each week, such as Tuesday evenings – in practical terms, this may mean only checking your work-related email once that night and not being completely 'off')
- Engage in a mandatory weekly pulse check (30 minutes discussion/evaluation)
- Pulse check: a review of each team member's goal, how the team worked to support it, and what might be done differently to meet that goal

Background
Implemented in 2.000 teams in 66 offices in 35 countries in Boston Consulting Group.
- Common challenge: lack of schedule predictability
- Goal: Making Time Off Predictable—and Required
- Target example: one evening off per week, facilitated by 30 minutes weekly pulse style discussion and evaluation
- Typically, conversations move from the specific goal to communication and coordination beyond it
- PTO was tested and developed in *particularly* challenging projects.

Note: it was subsequently shut down after a new CEO issued an 'all hands on deck' policy.

Outcomes
- Feeling comfortable taking time off for personal life (59% vs. 27%)
- Feeling satisfied with their work-life balance (62% vs. 38%)
- Imagining themselves being at the firm for the long term (69% vs. 40%)

Source: Perlow, 2012.
Note: There is much more information about this approach on the internet; just Google 'Predictability Teaming Open Communication'. In this research project, I hope to get a chance to evaluate it in a law firm context and to glean key takeaways from it.

Do-it-yourself instructions:
Pulse assessments of well-being in law firms during the pandemic

WHY?
We have no reliable maps or models for well-being in the new work-life and during the pandemic. Working from home introduces a list of new factors that impacts staff in unknown ways: working environment without professional furniture, size of living space, family situation, distance leadership for young and newly employed, self-leadership in remote working. The development of the pandemic is unpredictable, and it is therefore very important to keep a constant tab on the well-being of staff to quickly identify poor mental health.

WHAT?
WHO-5 is the World Health Organization's psychometric scale for measuring well-being. It is free, validated by numerous studies, concise, and available in many languages. You can find it on this link: https://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/who-5/who-5-questionnaires/Pages/default.aspx

My research has confirmed that WHO-5 provides broad and strong correlations with many critical factors in business lawyers, and constitutes a concise but still very reliable tool for pulse assessments.

What does it predict in associates in law firms?

Vigor ✔✔✔✔
Engagement ✔✔✔✔
Work-life balance ✔✔✔
Occupational Self-Efficacy ✔✔✔
Supervisor Autonomy Support ✔✔✔
Leadership Communication ✔✔✔
Teamwork ✔✔✔
Leadership ✔✔✔
Intention to quit ✔✔✔
Self-awareness in Leaders ✔✔✔
Delegation ✔✔
Social support at work ✔✔
Relatedness ✔✔
Organizational identification ✔✔

✔✔✔✔ = very strong correlation   ✔ = weak correlation
Note: ranking strength of correlations in research is not an objective practice, but rather depends on the context. I have relied upon Zedeck & Shultz (2009) to decide the level of strength in the correlations above.

HOW?

You can either run the pulse assessments in house, or you can let me do it (which would include analysis and industry specifc comparisons, i.e. benchmarking). If you run it yourself, the following protocol is recommended:

1. Run it the first week of every month (this will make your data more comparable).
2. Ask for gender and position: Junior Associate (0-2 years), Senior Associate (3+ years), Partner, or Support – but not office, as that opens up the door for identifying individuals, thus making it a GDPR issue.
3. If you want to assess regionally, such as by office, create two versions of the survey and alternate them. survey A will ask for office, and survey B for working experience. For instance, in January you would run survey A, in February survey B etc. This way you avoid making it possible to identify individuals in a survey
4. Make sure you don't assess small offices, or offices with just a couple of members of same sex, as this invalidates the anonymity.

Make the survey GDPR compliant by not collecting any data that can identify any individual, including IP addresses, email addresses etc. Also, if you add other items to the ones I have suggested, make sure that the parameters don't become so narrow so that anyone can be identified. For instance, if you asked for months worked at the firm, instead of the categories I have provided, it is very doable to identify at least some participants.

Descriptive statistics: correlational strengths and probabilities in WHO-5 in associates

Source: Näsström & Nyman, 2020

Data source: 12 law firms in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark

Participants: 595

Correlational strength is presented in the second column, WHO-5 Well-being, and runs on a scale from 0.01 (negligible strength) to 1.00 (complete correlation). As a rule of thumb, in this field of research, anything correlation above .20 is relevant, and over .40 is strong. *P* stands for probability, and represents the possibility of the correlation being generated by sheer luck. In general, any probability below 0.05 (i.e less than five percents chance) is considered reliable data.

Position	Participants
Junior associate (1-3 yrs of experience)	238
Senior associate (4+ yrs of experience)	208
Partner	157

## 1. Correlations of well-being

1.1 All participants

Variable	WHO-5 Well-being	*p*
Work-life balance	.39	.000
Social support at work	.27	.000
Social support outside of work	.08	.076
Occupational self-efficacy	.35	.000
Engagement	.54	.000
Vigor	.65	.000

1.2 Associates

Variable	WHO-5 Well-being	p
Supervisor autonomy support	.35	.000
Relatedness need satisfaction	.25	.000
Organisational identification	.22	.000
Delegation	.28	.000
Intention to quit	-.30	.000
Self-awareness	.30	.000
Leadership	.31	.000
Communication	.34	.000
Teamwork	.32	.000

1.3 Data percentiles by position
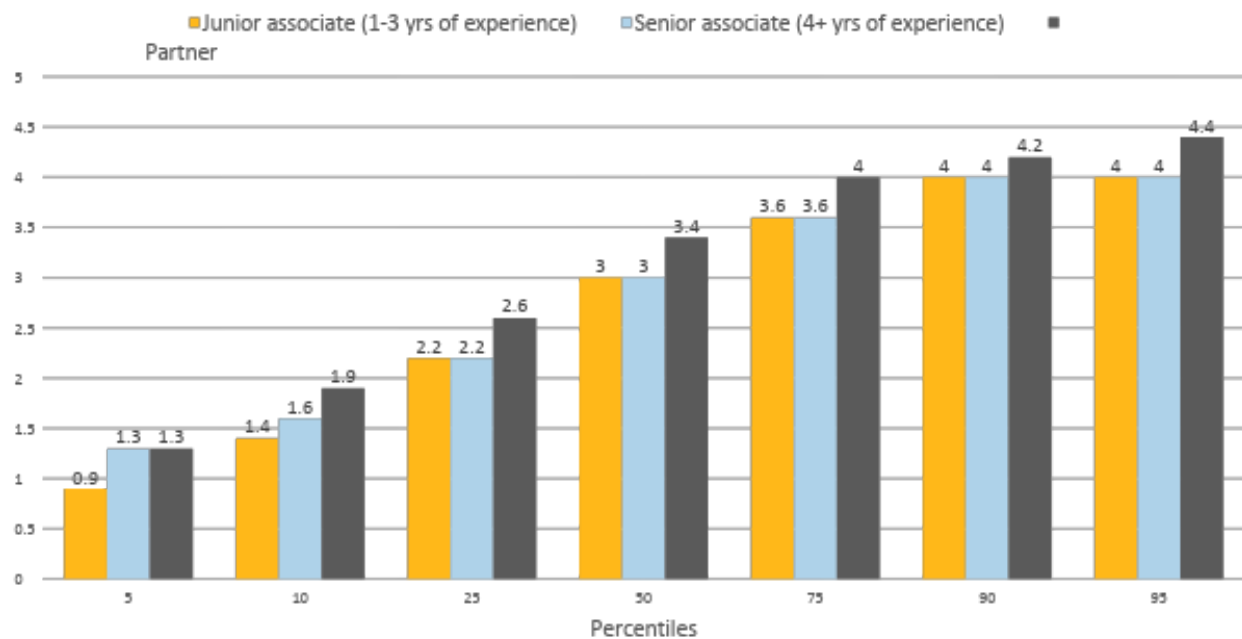
1.3 Data percentiles by gender
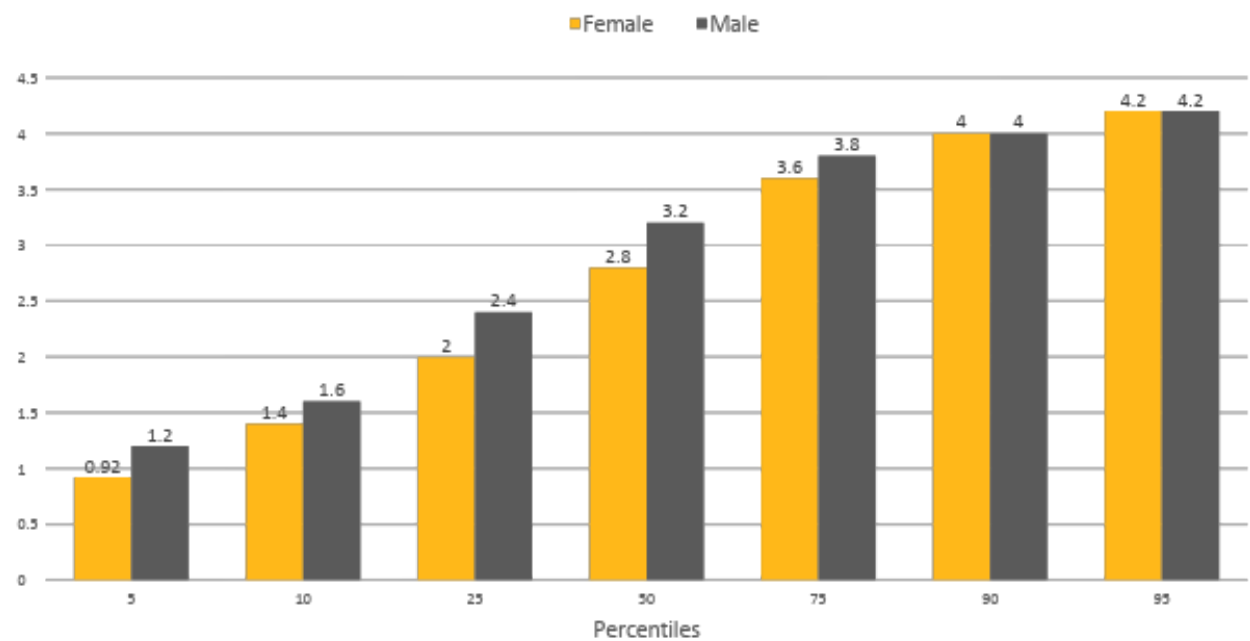
How can you tell if an associate is underperforming or floundering, when working at a distance?

- **Logged hours** – decrease without asking for more work
- **The quality of their work** – analytically sound? sloppy?
- **Timeliness** – missing deadlines, delay in responses, too quick turnaround of inferior quality
- **Passiveness** – lack of questions/interactions
- **Attitude and energy** – lack of energy, initiative, interest, positivity
- **Lack of engagement** – initiatives, interest, positivity, and proactivity
- **Pyjamas style** – sloppiness shines through in odd working hours, not properly dressed or prepared
- **Hard to reach** – "disappears" for hours

Examples of great remote leadership

- **- Pick up the phone!**
- **- Use camera in meetings**
- **- Connect daily**
- **- Talk about social stuff, not only work**
- **- Availability**
- **- Close and regular follow-ups**
- **- Feedback**
- **- Engage everyone to contribute to group meetings**
- **- Ensure everyone has work, and knows how to do it**
- **- Clear agenda**
- **- Clear instructions**
- **- Structure**
- **- Routines**

Source: Survey of twelve Nordic Law Firms under the Pandemic. Nässtrom, 2020.

Slide 1

welcome to connect on Linkedin:
https://www.linkedin.com/in/jensnasstrom/

www.nasstrom.info
(sign up for free webinars on
hybrid working in law firms)

jens@nasstrom.info

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Slide 2

Pros of office based work

- Established and proven
- Collaboration
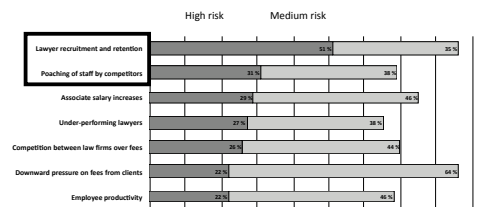- Professional development
- Social life of the firm

Slide 3

Cons of office based work

- Unflexible working arrangement
- Reduces work-life balance
- Drives burnout
- Employer branding problems
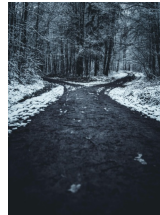

Slide 4

Greatest threats to profitability
Study from 55 Law firm Business Leaders

High risk   Medium risk

	High risk	Medium risk
Lawyer recruitment and retention	51 %	35 %
Poaching of staff by competitors	31 %	38 %
Associate salary increases	23 %	46 %
Under-performing lawyers	27 %	38 %
Competition between law firms over fees	26 %	44 %
Downward pressure on fees from clients	22 %	64 %
Employee productivity	22 %	46 %

Source: *2021 Law Firm Business Leaders Report*. Thomson Reuters

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Slide 5

The Selection Effect in Hybrid Working

- Job satisfaction
- Staff turnover
- Work-life balance
- Well-being
- Stress and burnout
- Employer branding

Sources: Bloom et al, 2015; Näsström, 2020a; Näsström, 2020b

Slide 6

Hybrid work

- Voluntary
- Light: 1-2 days per week
- Heavy: 3-5 days per week
- Fixed to maximize face time?

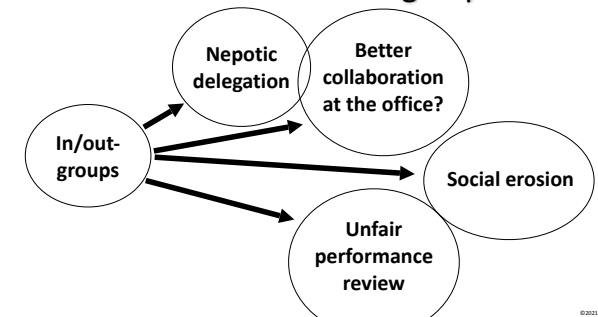## Slide 7

The Hybrid Work Challenge:
Partially Distributed Teams

Slide 8

Social erosion in partially distributed teams

Choice → Partially distributed teams → Sub-groups

Slide 9

Drawbacks with subgroups

In/out-groups → Nepotic delegation, Better collaboration at the office?, Unfair performance review → Social erosion

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MOVING BEYOND THE ACCOMMODATION APPROACH

Work Redesign

Do-it-yourself instructions:
Post-pandemic, how many of your staff would like to work from home?

WHY?
To facilitate a better self-understanding in the organization and getting partners to engage with the realities of the new work life – and what it entails.

Important note: my experience and previous research show that many individuals may change their position substantially on this matter over time. Their family situation may change; they may tire of one particular working arrangement etc. It is, therefore, essential to take the numbers as indicative and not definitive.

WHAT?
A short survey to take stock of the interest of remote working in a post-pandemic situation.

HOW?
If you run it yourself, the following protocol is recommended (this will make your data comparable):

1. Ask; *"Post-pandemic, how many days per week would you like to work from home?"* and offer the following options:
   a. None
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4
   f. 5
2. Ask for gender and position: Junior Associate (0-2 years), Senior Associate (3+ years), Partner, or Support – but not office, as that opens up the door for identifying individuals, thus making it a GDPR issue.

Make the survey GDPR compliant by not collecting any data that can identify any individual, including IP addresses, email addresses, and similarly traceable data. If you add other items to the ones I have suggested, make sure that the parameters don't become so narrow so that anyone can be identified. For instance, if you asked for months worked at the firm, instead of the categories I have provided, it is very doable to identify at least some participants.